REMARKS

Applicant has studied the Office Action dated November 14, 2005 and have made amendments to the claims. By this amendment, claims 1, 3-4, 6-8, 10, 12-13, 15-16, 18-20, 22 and 24 are amended. No new claims are added. No claims are canceled. Claims 1-24 remain pending. The specification was amended to correct the following: the word "earth" was replaced by the word "ground". The claims were amended to correct informalities and to change "earth" to "ground"; therefore, no new matter was added.

It is submitted that the application, as amended, is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claim Objections

The Examiner objected to several informalities in the claims. By this amendment, the Applicant has corrected several informalities. Therefore, Applicant requests that the Examiner's objection to claims 1-24 be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections under 35 USC §102

The Examiner rejected claims 1-24 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Reinschmidt et al., (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0084331), hereinafter "Reinschmidt". In particular, the Examiner rejected independent claims 1 and 13 as being anticipated by Reinschmidt.

Reinschmidt discloses a mask identification bit circuit (100) that provides one of two potentials (VGND or VPWR) to a sense node (108). Such a circuit may include a number of links (102-0 to 102-4) arranged in series, each link being formed on a different integrated circuit layer. A link includes inputs (104-0 and 104- 1) and outputs (106-0 and

106-1). In one configuration, inputs may be directly coupled to outputs. In another configuration, inputs may be cross-coupled to outputs. Cross coupling inputs and outputs of a link can switch the potential supplied to a sense node. The configuration of more than one link of the mask ID bit circuit can be changed, allowing the sense node to be switched between the two potential (VGND and VPWR) multiple times.

According to Reinschmidt, the circuit for identifying integrated circuit masks comprises interconnected links between a plurality of integrated layers that provide a signal path to the sense node, each link being switchable between the two mentioned configurations, and the switching of more than one link of the circuit from one configuration to another represents the multiple mask changes.

On the other hand, the device in accordance with the Applicant's invention determines the version of each of the different levels of metal mask corresponding respectively to each metal layer of an integrated circuit. The claimed invention comprises a mask version identification device that is distinct for each integrated circuit layer and that provides a binary output signal representative of the mask version utilized for the layer, *independently of an identification device for another layer*. There is no connection between each of the identification devices integrated on the plurality of integrated circuit layers and no signal path between them.

According to the invention, each identification device is distinct for each metal layer of the integrated circuit. According to the invention, each identification device comprises a first and a second voltage source for supplying a first and a second voltage level and an output bus connected selectively to one of the first and second voltage sources to generate the binary signal of the mask version used, independently of the information generated by the identification device for an other metal layer. Each layer comprises an output node coupled to one of the two different voltage sources integrated likewise on each layer, as recited in claims 1 and 13:

"at least a first voltage source for supplying a first voltage level,
at least a second voltage source for supplying a second voltage level"

Reinschmidt does not disclose a device with two different voltage sources integrated on each layer. On the contrary, according to Reinschmidt, there are only two potentials (VGND or VPWR) for all the interconnected links between the different layers.

The identification device in accordance with the present invention makes it possible to easily determine the version of each mask used for each metal layer of an integrated circuit. On the other hand, Reinschmidt teaches a circuit for identifying a particular **set** of masks used in the production of an integrated circuit, and not for separately identifying each mask used for each respective metal layer.

Each mask of a set of masks has its own version number. It is precisely an aim of the present invention to provide a device for determining the version of the metal mask utilized for each metal layer in an integrated circuit.

Therefore, Reinschmidt does not anticipate the claimed invention.

Claims 2-12 depend upon independent claim 1, and because dependent claims recite all the limitations of the independent claim, it is believed that dependent claims 2-12 also recite in allowable form. Claims 14-24 depend upon independent claim 13, and because dependent claims recite all the limitations of the independent claim, it is believed that dependent claims 14-24 also recite in allowable form.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing remarks, Applicant believes that the rejection of claims 1-24 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) has been overcome. Applicant requests that the Examiner allow claims 1-24.

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon was reviewed and is not considered pertinent to Applicant's disclosure. The other citations have been carefully considered, however none of them suggests a device such as claimed.

The foregoing is submitted as full and complete response to the Official Action mailed November 14, 2005, and it is submitted that claims 1-24 are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejection is requested. Allowance of claims 1-24 is earnestly solicited.

No amendment made was related to the statutory requirements of patentability unless expressly stated herein. No amendment made was for the purpose of narrowing the scope of any claim, unless Applicant has argued herein that such amendment was made to distinguish over a particular reference or combination of references.

Applicant acknowledges the continuing duty of candor and good faith to disclose information known to be material to the examination of this application. In accordance with 37 CFR §1.56, all such information is dutifully made of record. The foreseeable equivalents of any territory surrendered by amendment are limited to the territory taught by the information of record. No other territory afforded by the doctrine of equivalents is knowingly surrendered and everything else is unforeseeable at the time of this amendment by the Applicant and attorneys.

If the Examiner believes that there are any informalities that can be corrected by Examiner's amendment, or that in any way it would help expedite the prosecution of the patent application, a telephone call to the undersigned at (561) 989-9811 is respectfully solicited.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees that may be required or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account **50-1556**.

In view of the preceding discussion, it is submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and re-examination is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: _____

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